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FRANCE ◇ ALSACE ◇ LORRAINE

The Inviolable Pledge



MARCH 1st 1871 ◇ MARCH 1st 1918

COMITÉ
" L'EFFORT DE LA FRANCE ET DE SES ALLIÉS "



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The Protest

of

Alsace and Lorraine

MARCH 1st 1871 — MARCH 1st 1918

On Friday, February 17th 1871, before the National Assembly at Bordeaux, Emile Keller, Deputy of the Haut-Rhin, read out the protest drawn up by Gambetta with the approval of his colleagues representing Alsace and Lorraine :

Alsace and Lorraine are unwilling to be made over to aliens...

France cannot agree to sign away Lorraine and Alsace...
Europe cannot permit or ratify such a cession...

The very next day, through the medium of the representatives belonging to the Left, the young Republic, in answer to this declaration, made promise to support the claims of Alsace-Lorraine for ever .

To the Representatives of the Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, Moselle, Meurthe and Vosges departments.

Bordeaux, February 18th 1871.

Dear Colleagues and Fellow-countrymen,

By our applause yesterday, we endorsed unmistakably the Declaration laid by one of you, before the Assembly in respect of Alsace-Lorraine ; yet we would fain assure you once more that the representatives of Republican France share your sentiments and your opinion to the full. We feel bound, on our part, to the heroic populations whose representatives you are, just as they themselves feel bound to our common mother-country. We hereby declare

moreover, that neither we, nor the National Assembly, nor the French Nation as a whole, have any right to make a single one of your constituents a subject of Prussia ; and like you, *we consider beforehand as null and void any act or treaty, any vote or plebiscite, approving the cession of any portion whatever of Alsace or Lorraine.* Come what may, the citizens of those two countries will remain our fellowcountrymen and brothers, and the Republic promises them to uphold that claim for ever.

Heartily clasping the hand you hold out to us, and with all brotherly greetings, we remain ever yours :

VICTOR HUGO, LOUIS BLANC, E. QUINET, V. SCHÆLCHER, CHARLES FLOQUET, MILLIÈRE, TOLAIN, CLEMENCEAU, GREPPO, MARTIN-BERNARD, J. ANDRIEU (Oran), COLAS (Constantine), JEAN BRUNET, Eugène FARCY, Ed. LOCKROY, P. TIRARD, A. PEYRAT, E. RAZOUS, Ch. LEPÈRE, CARION, A. DUBOIS, A. GENT, DUCOUX, SADI CARNOT, B. MALON, P. JOIGNEAUX, RATHIER (Yonne), Ed. ADAM, P. COURNET, MOREAU (Côte-d'Or), Henri BRISSON, C. TRIDON, LANGLOIS, Cyprien GIRARD, A. RANC, ANAT, FERD. CAMBON.

A few days after, March 1st, the cession of Alsace and Lorraine was perforce agreed to, and in the name of his colleagues who were about to withdraw from the Assembly for ever, Jules Grosjean, Deputy of the Haut-Rhin department, craved leave to address the House, and voiced the most pathetic of protests.

This supreme declaration it is that France has desired to commemorate on March 1st 1918.

The official tribute rendered to the faithful attachment of Alsace and Lorraine in the great hall of the Sorbonne, has been endorsed throughout France, by demonstrations of a thoroughly national character and significance.

At the selfsame time as in Paris, a like ceremony was held at Bordeaux. In every town and village, the terms of the protest were posted up for public perusal ; the document was read out and commented upon both in the State and in the free schools, before the soldiers and the sailors, in the churches, temples and synagogues, wherever people think, or teach, or pray.

The whole country was thrilled to its depths, united in a common hope. Faithful to past memories and strong in its sense of right and justice, it appealed together with Alsace and Lorraine to the conscience of all mankind.

PAUL LABBÉ,

Secrétaire général du Comité organisateur.

ADDRESS

BY

Mr. Antonin Dubost

President of the Senate.

I have not come here, Gentlemen, in the name of the Senate, as to one of those old and pathetic commemorations, at which Alsace-Lorraine received anew the assurance of France's grieving and faithful attachment. The time is no longer for sentimental regret and empty wishes, but for supreme decisions and dauntless energy. Alsace-Lorraine wishes to be taken back, not to be mourned for.

Why were those fair lands wrested from us? As mere spoils, of course, for the sake of their rich plains and forests, for the wealth of their mineral production.

And why do we claim to have them restored to us? On account of that wealth? Perish the thought! Not for this have our sons laid down their lives. Not for this are others yet prepared to die, but because they are part of our blood and heart and soul, still a-quiver with their former life.

Because, moreover, they have become a world-wide symbol, because for half a century they have hung bleeding on the gallows of crucified nations,

while mankind looked on, as the case might be, in sorrow, indifference, or actual complicity.

So long as Alsace has not been taken down from that cross and restored to her previous existence, so long will the world suffer the unspeakable horrors of which this war will not be the last.

Above all, Gentlemen, let us beware of putting our trust in the mystic virtue of suffering, of ideals, and more particularly of phrases. Can we not see for ourselves, at the present time, whither such mysticism in politics is bound to lead? To slavery, if not to downright treason. Taken captive by might, by might alone can Alsace be freed.

« Might is stronger than right », says her captor.

« Might causes right to prevail », will be the answer of her deliverers, our heroic soldiers!

SPEECH

BY

Mr. Pául Deschanel

President of the Chamber of Deputies.

Addressing the Reichstag the other day, Count Hertling, Chancellor of the German Empire declared :

« Alsace and Lorraine are made up, for the greater part, of purely German territories that had been wrested from the German Empire by brutal annexations, by violations of international law carried on through the ages, until the Revolution of 1789 swallowed up the last morsel. Thus did they become French provinces. And in 1870, when we claimed back the territories taken from us in this criminal way, the case was not one of conquest, but of « dis-annexation », accepted and endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the National Assembly, the lawful representation of the French people. »

To such assertions, based solely upon reasons of State, but assiduously taught throughout Germany, from the primary schools to the Universities, it is my purpose, as the confident mouthpiece of the French Chamber, to oppose the actual facts, and dates, and documents.

First as regards the Metz district.

About the middle of the sixteenth century, Charles the Fifth, then at the height of his power, dreams of universal domination, not only in the political, but in the religious sphere. His aim is to enforce Roman Catholicism upon the Protestants of Germany, who at the time — according to Sybel — number some seven-tenths of the population.

The Protestant leaders array themselves against him. He overpowers them, occupies their lands, deprives the free cities of the benefit of their charters, disarms and plunders the inhabitants, and sets up Italian and Spanish garrisons in their strongholds. He forbids all Protestant forms of worship. He attempts to alter the Statute of the Empire, so that his own son may be sure of succeeding to the throne. The Electors, robbed of their rights, swear to defend the « law of the Empire », and « never again to make a Spaniard their Emperor. »

But Charles the Fifth is not satisfied with exercising the power of an absolute sovereign, he speaks in the character of High Pontiff. The Pope takes umbrage and the Roman Catholics, in their turn, come to look upon the Emperor as an oppressor of free conscience, usurping the powers of the Holy See. A coalition is formed under the leadership of Maurice of Saxony and Margrave Albert of Brandenburg — an ancestor of William II.

Yet what hope is there of breaking the circle of iron that grows narrower day by day? Assistance is needed from without, and such assistance France alone can tender.

Ambassadors are sent to Henry II with a request for his intervention in order — I quote verbatim — « to restore the freedom of their country. »

« Charles the Fifth, they proceed to state, wishes to enslave the German nation forever and to encompass the fall of Germany from her old privileges and liberties to a state of bestial and unbearable slavery, such as exists in Spain and other places. On February 15th, 1552, at Chambord, the King of France undertakes to supply them with troops and money and they in return urge him — again I quote their very words — « to occupy *as soon as possible* and to *keep* the towns that are not of German speech, viz : Cambrai, Toul, Metz, Verdun, and others of a like description. »

So much for Metz. Is this what Count Hertling calls « snatching away territories by violence and in a criminal way? »

Eighty years after, Alsace — which had first been Gallic, then Roman, then Frankish — is handed over to France in the same way and for the same reasons :

In 1633, yet another ancestor of William II, the Elector of Brandenburg George William, requests the alliance of Louis XIII, begging him « to take in hand the work of protection and mediation » and « to act with salutary promptness. »

During the long struggle, indeed, between Catholics and Protestants, which had filled the first half of the seventeenth century, the Protestants had suffered defeat at Prague and the humiliating treaty of Lubeck ; the Emperor Ferdinand II had issued in 1629 the Edict of Restitution, which would have brought about the ruin of Protestantism ; he, too, tried to induce the Electors to crown his son King of the Romans, a first step towards making the Imperial crown hereditary. In 1634, he was again victorious at Nordlingen. The situation grew more

perilous every hour. Then it was that the Duke of Wurttemberg, the Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg and the rest of the confederate Princes turned to the framers of the Edict of Nantes and appealed for help to the King of France. On November 1st, 1634, by the Treaty of Paris, Louis XIII promises them an army and financial assistance ; the confederates, in return, specify that « the land of Alsace shall be committed to His Majesty's protection, with the fortresses and towns belonging thereto. »

In taking this step, moreover, the Confederates did but follow the inclinations and wishes of the Alsatian towns themselves : on previous occasions, in 1633 and in 1634, the County of Hanau, then Haguenau, Saverne, Colmar, devastated both by the Imperial troops and by the Swedes, the allies of France, had appealed to Louis XIII for protection and called for French garrisons to ensure their security and to uphold their rights.

In this case again it was not only the Protestants, but the Catholics as well, the Bishop of Spire, the Archbishops of Treves, Mainz and Cologne, who on finding themselves humiliated and forsaken by the Emperor called in the French King and his troops to their assistance.

And when, towards the close of the Thirty Years' War, the small autonomous States, the small Republics of Alsace, that might well have expected the distant might of Vienna to provide for their security and for the defence of their liberties, when Alsace, laid waste by every army in turn, reduced to a state of absolute ruin, a prey to famine and pestilence, with half her population destroyed, is about to be sold to Spain by Austria, the Treaties of Westphalia

lay down once for all the situation and the rights of France in Alsace and in the Metz district, a situation endorsed, for all the quibbles of German commentators, by every subsequent European agreement.

In 1760, Baron Schmettau, Minister of Prussia in Paris, declared before the Hague Conference : « It is a well-established fact that the inhabitants of Alsace are more French than the Parisians themselves... Whenever the report is spread abroad that the Germans intend to cross the Rhine, they hasten up in crowds to oppose their passage.

In 1781, Strasbourg, when commemorating the first centenary of her union to France, declares by the mouthpiece of her representatives : « All orders and citizens of the town of Strasbourg, having enjoyed for one hundred years under French rule a measure of peace and happiness unknown to their forefathers, are unanimously resolved to give public expression to their feelings of gratitude and attachment. » Verily, long before the Revolution, Alsace was French, not only by right, but also at heart. Ever since the idea of having a country of one's own was first conceived, Alsace has claimed to be French.

Lastly, is there any more truth in the contention that Lorraine was « violently wrested from Germany? »

M: Raymond Poincaré could tell you better than myself that when Duke Leopold, just before his death in 1729, managed to bring about the fulfilment of his dearest wish—the betrothal of his son, Francis III to the Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria; the heiress to the throne of the Hapsburgs—he was well aware, as a shrewd politician, that the young prince, on becoming Emperor, would not be able to remain

Duke of Lorraine. But his choice was made : he considered that the cession of his duchy was but the price to be paid for the exalted situation bestowed upon his line. King Stanislas, the father-in-law of Louis XV was given Lorraine as a life estate with reversion to France at his demise ; Francis III of Lorraine received the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany, where the last of the Medici was dying, and in 1733 he who was eventually known as the Great Frederick gave his ready approval to the treaty and wrote that « his love of peace alone had brought the King of France to accept Lorraine ».

Can this be called snatching away territories « by violations of international law » or « in a criminal way »? Why the Germans themselves are constantly refuting the Chancellor. Alas, Gentlemen, the Germans have in the very camp of their enemies and among the neutrals two far more powerful allies than Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria : ignorance and forgetfulness !

Count Hertling went on to say that « the Revolution of 1789 swallowed up the last morsel. » What does he mean by this? Is the reference to Mulhouse? Mulhouse was a Republic united, ever since the fifteenth century, with the Swiss Confederation; in 1798 she gave herself, of her own free will, to the French Republic.

These facts may no doubt be unpalatable to the Germans, but try as they will, they cannot disprove them.

As to the vote of the National Assembly in 1871, and to what the Chancellor is pleased to call a « disannexation », the immortal protest of the deputies of Alsace-Lorraine and the heart-rending sorrow with which that protest was voiced from the tribune

have answered him once and for all. The Assembly voted with the knife at its throat and to spare the country further agonies : nor has this dreadful rending asunder of the French family failed, during the past forty seven years, to temper the moral discipline of every one worthy to be called a Frenchman.

Then followed the long martyrdom of Alsace-Lorraine : the soul of France quivering in her down-trodden provinces ; the protest in the Reichstag of all the deputies of Alsace-Lorraine stifled under the jeers and insults of enemies to whom generosity is unknown ; the tragic conflict between two duties : to emigrate in order to die in France, or to remain on the spot so as not to leave the land and the factories to the Germans ; brothers arrayed against one another in their respective armies ; the unanimously adverse elections in 1887, followed by Bismarck's revenge : the persecutions, petty annoyances and vexations of every description ; the passport regulations, the sentences, the leaden silence, the « peace of the graveyard » ; lastly, with the coming of the twentieth century, the awakening of the Alsatian conscience among the younger generations ; the struggle for French civilisation and the French tongue, and for political rights ; the popular demonstrations at Noisseville, at Wissembourg ; the pilgrimages to the battlefields and to the graves of the gallant dead, to the military reviews at Belfort and at Nancy ; the meetings of the *Souvenir* associations ; and then the Saverne outburst, by one and all of which are made manifest the eternal incompatibility, the deep gulf between the German mind and the Alsatian soul, acknowledged by the Germans themselves. « The Alsations love France as chil-

dren love their mother », says Professor Werner Wittich, of Strasbourg University. « We are camping in enemy country », exclaims Herr von Jagow ; and since the war began, the countless desertions from that hallowed land, where everything breathes of France, to avoid the monstrous necessity of shooting at France, the 10.000 deportations to Germany, the 6.000 years of imprisonment inflicted upon the defaulters.

What, indeed, does the history of Alsace during the past four centuries reveal, but the constant struggle between liberty and oppression? It is the cause of liberty that France champions, when in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries she fights against the Hapsburgs, the oppressors of conscience, and when the forefathers of those who are laying her waste at the present time seek their safety in her alliance ; it is for the sake of liberty that Alsace and Lorraine, participating in the joys, the intoxication, the victories of the Republic, and finding in that form of Government free play for their own genius, unite with France in proclaiming before the world the rights of man and the rights of nations — that principle of nationalities which, perverted and travestied by the Germans, is now so wrongfully brought forward against ourselves ; it is against oppression that a stand is made in 1871, before the National Assembly by Gambetta, Grosjean, Keller, Kuss, Scheurer-Kestner and all the other representatives of Alsace-Lorraine, backed by Victor Hugo, Edgar Quinet, Louis Blanc, Schœlcher, Sadi Carnot, Henri Brisson, Charles Floquet, Arthur Ranc, Edouard Lockroy, Edmond Adam, Clemenceau, the foremost men of our democracy and by that great leader Chanzy, who had so proudly held aloft

the flag of the Republic ; it is against oppression that a protest is made in the Reichstag by Deutsch and all his colleagues of Alsace-Lorraine, the great Dupont des Loges, Winterer, Guerber, Simonis, Kablé, Antoine ; against oppression, again, that the dauntless and faithful spirit of Alsace-Lorraine has never ceased to struggle since the accursed year ; that Preiss in 1897 utters his indignant warning in the Reichstag ; it is for liberty that ever since 1871 so many Alsatians and Lorrainers have covered themselves with glory in the ranks of our army, approving themselves the worthy descendants of Fabert, Kleber, Kellermann, Ney, Lefebvre, Lasalle, Custine, Richepanse, Rapp, Lobau, Schramm, Westermann, Paixhans, Berckheim, heroes one and all of the Napoleonic age ; and at the present time it is the liberty of the world that France, all bleeding but more beautiful, more resplendent than ever, has saved on the Marne and at Verdun.

The nations have grasped the fact and their Governments are agreed upon it : the question of Alsace-Lorraine is no longer one concerning only France and Germany, as averred by Bismarck, to whose mind the *Reichsland* was but the *glacis* of the Empire, while others value it chiefly for its iron ore and potash : it has become an international question.

For indeed, if Germany were to remain mistress of these approaches, if her formidable instruments of aggression were to remain concentrated at a few days' march from Paris, and if, moreover, the greatest treason known to History were to leave Eastern Europe under her sway, such would be the military terror she would inspire throughout the world, so intolerable would be the yoke, that mankind, instead

of closing for ever the era of great wars, would open it afresh.

Nor is this merely a territorial, political and military question, it is a moral problem, a problem of law, a religion, and that is why the question of Alsace-Lorraine has become an international question.

Germany has torn up the Treaty of Frankfort. She has therefore placed Europe once more in the legal situation that obtained before 1871. In the eyes of all the nations, determined as they are to be no longer liable to seizure like mere chattels, before the conscience of all mankind, the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France, in accordance with the Declaration of Bordeaux and the reinstatement as French citizens of the persons designated by Art. 2 of the Treaty of Frankfort, appear henceforth as the guarantee of the liberation of oppressed nationalities, the vindication of justice and the triumph of freedom.

SPEECH

BY

Mr. Welschinger

*Member of the Institute, Keeper of the Records to the
National Assembly at Bordeaux.*

The *Comité de l'Effort de la France et de ses Alliés* has honoured me with the request that I should read out to you on this solemn occasion the last protest made by the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine at the sitting of March 1st, 1871.

Before I fulfil that duty I may be permitted, as an eye-witness, briefly to retrace the scene and describe the actors of that dramatic occurrence, now forty-seven years old.

Appointed as official Recorder to the National Assembly, I was present at that memorable sitting, no detail of which escaped my attention. The proceedings, indeed, were sufficiently impressive to remain forever in my memory as clear and well-defined as when they had just taken place, I am able therefore, to describe to you exactly the general impression produced by the declaration made by M. Louis Grosjean, on behalf of the twenty-eight representatives of the Moselle, the Meurthe, the

Bas-Rhin and the Haut-Rhin, who attended the meeting.

The Honourable, M. Grosjean, Prefect of the Haut-Rhin department had hastened to Belfort as soon as war was declared on July 15th, 1870, to co-operate with Colonel Denfert-Rochereau in the defence of that stronghold. There he bore himself valiantly, enduring the hardships of the long siege with the same unassuming steadfastness as the rest of the garrison. He was informed of the fact that he had been elected the day after the result of the ballot was made known and he was authorised to cross the German lines to come to Bordeaux and perform the duty of a citizen at the National Assembly, just as he had performed the duty of a soldier at Belfort.

On February 15th, M. Richier, in announcing the result of the Haut-Rhin elections, mentioned M. Grosjean as being third on the list, with 55,371 votes, the first two being M. Emile Keller and Colonel Denfert-Rochereau. The speaker went on to extol the gallant city of Belfort, which still kept the Prussians away from its walls, and called upon the deeply moved Assembly to pay a tribute of patriotic admiration to those countrymen of ours, who refused to surrender.

At the never-to-be-forgotten sitting of February 17th, Emile Keller had read out the first solemn protest of the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine, a protest known to you all, that has been read and is remembered by the whole world, and which at the moment thrilled the Assembly to such a degree that it was on the verge of declaring itself in favour of continuing the struggle and only consented to treat at the pressing solicitation of M. Thiers. That enlightened citizen and shrewd politician was alive

to the necessity of making the best of the present, with an eye to the future, but though the Assembly decided to trust to the wisdom and patriotism of its negociators none the less had it expressed the warmest and most sincere sympathy for those who had said : « We call our French fellow-countrymen, the Governments and the nations of the whole world to witness that we hold beforehand as null and void any deed, treaty, vote or plebiscite making over to an alien Power all or part of our provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. We hereby proclaim to be forever inviolable the right of Alsatians and Lorrainers to remain members of the French nation, and we swear and make oath, both for ourselves and for our constituents, our children and their issue, to claim that right eternally and by every manner of means, as against ever usurper ! »

Eleven days later, M. Louis Grosjean attended once more, to read out the supreme declaration of the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine, which this time assumed the character of the most pathetic and most dignified of leave-takings.

This honour his patriotic conduct at Belfort had won for him, just as M. Emile Keller, in recognition of his energetic leadership as commanding officer of the *Légion d'Alsace-Lorraine*, had been chosen to read and comment upon the Declaration of February 17th.

The National Assembly held its sittings in the auditorium of the Théâtre Louis, fitted up for the purpose. It was six o'clock in the evening. Night had closed in and the House was lit up by the big chandelier. The President, Jules Grévy, after a lengthy debate that had commenced at one, made known to the distracted Assembly the result of the

ballot on the Peace Preliminaries. Out of a total of 653 votes, 546 had been cast in favour of the motion, 107 against. A spell of deep silence ensued. After so many dramatic incidents, such as the destitution of the Emperor and the stirring orations of Edgar Quinet, Bamberger, Victor Hugo, Tachard, Vacherot, Louis Blanc, Emile Keller, and more particularly the two impressive speeches of M. Thiers, the Assembly was somewhat overwhelmed, and though fully expected, the result of the final ballot added to the general feeling of oppression. It has been stated since that the members were in a hurry to have done with it, that the majority had made up their minds to sacrifice the two provinces. Now I can solemnly assert, as a witness and as an Alsatian, that the patriotic considerations adduced by M. Thiers, speaking from his heart and with sorrowful conviction, were the only motives that induced the National Assembly to consent to so bitter a sacrifice. Though taking opposite sides, majority and minority alike suffered the same anguish, the same grief, the same regret.

Then it was that M. Jules Grosjean craved permission to address the House. With slow steps he ascended the tribune, and amid a still deeper and almost religious silence he uttered these lofty words, while every now and then a quiver of suppressed pain would betray the agony underlying the studied composure of his attitude :

« Made over, in despite of all justice and by a hateful abuse of force, to alien domination, we have a last duty to fulfil.

« We declare once again to be null and void a compact that gives us away without our consent.

« Our collective and individual claim to redress

remains open for ever, in the shape and to the extent our conscience shall dictate.

« On the point of leaving this House, in which dignity forbids our sitting any longer, and for all the bitterness of our sorrow, the last thought that wells up from the depth of our hearts is one of gratitude towards those who for six months have not ceased to stand by us, and of undying attachment to the country from which we are being torn by violence.

« Our best wishes will attend you, and we will wait, with full trust in the future, for the time when a regenerate France shall take up once more the threads of her mighty destiny.

« Your brothers of Alsace and Lorraine, though now separated from our common family, will preserve for France, while she is absent from our homes, the full treasure of their filial affection until the day comes when she shall return to fill her accustomed place by our fireside. »

Except for one or two rounds of applause and other irrepressible tokens of the deepest emotion, the members of the Assembly, every one of whom had risen to his feet, listened in subdued silence to the reading of this Declaration. But as soon as it came to an end there arose from all quarters of the House the most touching, the most affectionate protests : « Why should you leave us ? » was the general cry. « Remain, do remain with the Assembly ? » Many of the representatives crowded round Grosjean, Keller, Bamberger, Gambetta, Hartmann, Kœchlin and their colleagues, attempting to prevent them forcibly from leaving the House, adjuring them with every sign of the most spontaneous, the most generous emotion. Deeply affected by these de-

monstrations, the departing members, unable to restrain their tears, and expressing their gratitude by broken words and despairing gestures, filed out slowly, one by one, while the public in the galleries, who had watched the painful scene in breathless suspense, joined in the eager acclamations and entreaties of the members. The whole dramatic climax took up but a few minutes, yet it seemed an eternity... Then, amid the wildest confusion, the President gave out the business on the paper for the next sitting. Everybody made for the doors, a prey to compelling emotion and repeating to himself the concluding words uttered by M. Grosjean with such soulful feeling : « Your brothers of Alsace and Lorraine, though now separated from our common family will preserve for France, while she is absent from our homes, the full treasure of our filial affection, until the day comes when she shall return to fill her accustomed place by our fireside. »

And you, my countrymen, in whose hearing have to-day been repeated the exalted vows of February 17th and March 1st, 1871, do you consider that there is any need for the Alsatians and Lorrainers, who have kept them so faithfully, to renew those vows to-day, as a token that they are and will ever remain attached and bound, heart and soul, to France their true and only country.

That which they declared and bound themselves on oath to fulfil — twice at Bordeaux in 1871, and again in the Reichstag at Berlin, in 1874 — is verily sufficient. One and all you will endorse, as a conclusion beyond recall, the words spoken by our beloved countrymen forty-seven year ago, words I am happy to recall in the presence of the delegates of the reconquered areas of Alsace, and gazing at

those wreaths brought but yesterday from the Thann forest. These are the words, eloquent in their simplicity, used on that occasion by our Alsatian countrymen, and which we will now repeat after them : « This Declaration, Gentlemen, will meet with your unanimous approval, for our very honour and national unity are at stake, and on such points as these there can be no dissentient voice raised in any French Assembly.

SPEECH

BY

Mr. Jules Siegfried

Deputy, on behalf of Alsace.

The protests that have just been read out to you remain after forty-seven years as moving and as convincing as when first uttered.

After declaring forever inviolable their right to remain members of the French nation and asserting their determination to uphold that claim, our fellow-countrymen of Alsace held their promise faithfully.

They suffered terribly during that long spell of captivity ; no one has forgotten the draconian passport laws by which it was sought to cut them off from France, nor the measures taken against the teaching of the French language, proscribed even on the tombs of the dead, nor again the insults heaped upon the population by the military caste, notably at Saverne, with the unrestricted approval of the German Government.

The inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine have never ceased to protest against all these persecutions, nor did their representatives fail to manifest on every occasion, by their votes and by their attitude, their opposition to German rule. Germany, therefore, was

under no delusion concerning the true sentiments of our countrymen, and the Imperial Chancellor, Count Caprivi did not hesitate to declare in the Reichstag : « It is a fact that after seventeen years of annexation, the German spirit has made no progress in Alsace. » Later on, Herr von Jagow, then Prefect of Police at Berlin, summed up his opinion in the words : « We are encamped in enemy country. »

Since the war broke out, our enemies have given their anger free rein. They have taken revenge for the desertions that are to be reckoned by tens of thousands, among the Alsatian soldiers whom they attempted to coerce into fighting against their true country, by confiscating the property of the absconders and by inflicting countless punishments and vexations upon the old men, women and children who perforce remained behind.

Yet nothing has availed to impair their love for France. Let me recall to you what our great Alsatian historian, Reuss, wrote after losing his three sons on our battlefields : « Thousands upon thousands of our gallant boys have already fallen upon Alsatian soil in order to free it from the German yoke ; it would be enough to make one despair of eternal justice, if their generous blood had been shed in vain for the cause of liberty. They are entitled to sleep their last in a free land. For the sake of the dead and of the living, of heroes and victims alike, we must persevere to the end, and gain the final victory which will do away, once for all, with the bitter slavery we have endured for forty-seven years. »

On behalf of all the Alsations : of the many who left their native land that they might remain French ; of those who in Thann, in Massevaux, in Dannemarie,

for close upon four years, have seen the tricolor float once more over their homes ; of those, too, who being still under the yoke are unable to give free expression to their true feelings ; on behalf of all these, and repeating the noble words read out to you by M. Welschinger, one of the men who do the greatest credit to our Alsace, I here again declare « to be null and void a compact that bartered us away without our consent. »

The right of the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine to remain members of the French family is unassailable ; it cannot be contested and requires no confirmation. That right we proclaim anew, as in 1871, and like Gambetta, putting our trust in « immanent justice », we look forward confidently to the coming of the day when crossing the blue line of the Vosges with their stately fir-trees, we shall make our way down into the fruitful Alsatian plain, having before us the great industrial city of Mulhouse, whence have radiated so many noble social ideas ; the town of Colmar, made famous by such a number of great thinkers, artists and generals ; the birth-place of the *Marseillaise*, Strasbourg, with her lofty cathedral ; and so once and for all deliver our beloved countrymen, who will help us to make good the disastrous effects of the war and together with our mighty and generous Allies to further the progress of mankind.

SPEECH

BY

Mr. Maurice Barrès

on behalf of Lorraine.

On March 1st 1871, after the deputies of Alsace and Lorraine had read out their imperishable declaration in the National Assembly at Bordeaux, their colleagues rose to a man, and with outstretched arms called out to them : « Remain with us... » But what would have been their qualification, henceforth, to join in the discussion of French interests? They were no longer free men. In sorrowful silence they withdrew from the House to join their unfortunate countrymen.

Then begins the era of profound indifference with which the nations view the grinding of our brothers under the German heel. The outside world listens with some slight emotion to the tramping feet of Lorrainers emigrating to France in their thousands, and again, at each successive anniversary, to the distant murmur of fervent prayers at the graves of the heroic dead. But that is all. The world hardens its heart against the protests of the captives. The Chanceries say : « These are local matters », the political philosophers : « They are matters of past History. »

For half a century the Germans strove without let or hindrance to debase Lorraine, to break the spirit of Metz, the proud and courtly spirit engendered in the Roman age and freely developed in the atmosphere of France. A dastardly attempt to destroy the moral freedom of a superior people. But the old City on the banks of the Moselle and the Seille, with her surrounding villages and plum-orchards, kept her face steadfastly turned towards her only mother-country. Finding no outlet for her genius in her social surroundings, she kept the fires brightly burning on the hearths of each separate family.

Our noble countrymen learned the lesson of adversity, than which there is no better school. They grew to understand what the whole world ignored. Practically the whole elite of Lorraine had left the country to come to France, unable to put up any longer with alien oppression; those that remained behind grew wise and mastered the secret of the future.

They were told at every turn with gross lack of comprehension: « You are fortunate, indeed, to live among the most scientifically organised nation the world has ever seen. » Their answer was: « That organisation is to us unbearable; it radiates no sympathetic heat. It ignores or despises our hearts and our minds. These rough taskmasters are merely concerned with hammering us into fit material for the building up of Greater Germany. In their hands the very sciences become the instruments of ruthless inhumanity. What they lack, from first to last, is education of the feelings. » And the conclusion was ever the same: « Their *Kultur* is hateful to us, but what a power in the land! What a menace to the spiritual treasure now in your keeping! Re-

main united and see to it that you are well armed for the protection of that which they have sworn to destroy. »

Thus did our brothers speak, in the full and tragic knowledge of the impending assault upon civilisation. And if the nations had been alive to the significance of their words, they would have perceived that the issue in Alsace-Lorraine was not merely as between France and Germany, but between two conflicting sets of ideas : on the one hand, the sense of right and of human dignity, the free spirit of the citizen ; on the other, a purely animal lust of domination. They would have foreseen the present upheaval, and the complaint of Metz and Strasbourg would have sounded in their ears, not as the last sob, the almost unheeded epilogue of the Franco-German drama, but as a cry of warning, a call to arms for the Great War.

Not one of the world-famed sayings of diplomats or political philosophers during the past fifty years can compare for discerning insight with the daily utterances of the humblest Metz or Strasbourg shopkeepers. Those sons of an ancient civilisation were filled with disgust by the ever more insensate megalomania of the booted Germans who lorded it in their thoroughfares. They foresaw everything, they foretold everything. Had they been listened to, dreadful calamities would at least have been palliated. All honour to the discerning few who in the outside world echoed their prognostications, and first to those immigrants from Alsace and Lorraine who settled among us, unwilling to sever the ties that bound them to their native land. To him, too, who was the living emblem of the popular trust and belief in the eventual vindication of jus-

tice, and whom History will set down as a seer and a prophet, Paul Déroulède !

For forty-four years a poisonous breath has blown over Alsace and Lorraine, compelling the inhabitants to leave the country; or to shut themselves up in their houses, where they pined and wasted away. But the rest of the nations took no heed of the pestilence, until it spread throughout Europe and even crossed the Atlantic. The roar of the guns alone availed to draw the world from its stupor. Now at last, the British, the Belgians, the Italians, the Serbs, the Rumanians and the men of North and South America are aware that this unbearable miasma emanates from Germany. All have sworn to rid the earth of the foul disease that threatens civilisation. And by virtue of this resolve, they have all become citizens of Alsace and Lorraine.

Alsace and Lorraine, condemned to silence and forsaken by the nations ever since March 1st 1871, are now privileged to give mankind its watchword :

DELIVERANCE !

SPEECH

BY

Mr. Stephen Pichon

Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Our direst foe in the war of 1871, Marshal von Moltke, declared on the morrow of the Treaty of Frankfort that it would take no less than half a century to detach from France the heart of her lost provinces.

It is now forty-seven years since the population of Alsace-Lorraine was brought under the yoke of a victorious enemy, yet never has their determination to be reunited to their mother-country been more self-evident than it is to-day.

The double protest lodged by Emile Keller and Jules Grosjean before the National Assembly at Bordeaux on behalf of the representatives of the Bas-Rhin, the Haut-Rhin, the Moselle, and the Meurthe, a protest renewed three years later by Teutsch, in the Reichstag, remains the symbol of the persistent demand for redress of a people annexed by Germany in contempt of international law.

No measure of violence devised by unscrupulous conquerors to coerce a subject race has availed to transmute French minds into German minds, to

induce the heirs of the protestators — whose memory is ever with us — to forget or to repudiate the past, the long ages of glory, self-devotion and sacrifice binding them forever to the country of their choice.

For indeed Alsace and Lorraine belonged to France on very different grounds from those alleged by the spokesmen of Prussia and of the Hohenzollerns. According to the present German Chancellor, they were « purely German territories », wrested from their lawful owners by high-handed action kept up for centuries, until at last the French Revolution appropriated what had not been stolen before. Truly a marvellous way of writing history, and one that might well amaze us, did it not proceed from the successors of the man who falsified the Ems dispatch and of that other Chancellor who, adding insult to perjury, did not blush to accuse Belgium of having brought upon herself the invasion of her territory by entering into a scheme of aggression against the violators of her neutrality.

Not we, Gentlemen, but the King of Prussia himself, at the very time when he was engaged upon the criminal deed of seizing our two provinces, put on record indisputable evidence showing how contrary to the truth is the contention that he did but take back German lands, when by right of conquest he incorporated Alsace and Lorraine with his Empire.

Here we have a document that proves the case to the hilt. It is a letter, partly made known already, addressed to H. M. the Empress Eugénie, who considerately sent in the original a few days ago to our National Record Office. It was written to her from Versailles, October 26, 1870, by the grandfather of William II. The actual words it contains are as follows : « After making immense sacrifices in her

own self-defence, Germany is determined that the next war will find her better prepared to repel the aggression we must needs expect as soon as France has recruited her strength and procured allies. *This sad consideration alone, not a desire for the expansion of a country large enough as it is, compels me to insist upon the cession of territories, the only object of that demand being to move back the starting-point of the French armies that will attack us in the future.* »

Is this clear and explicit, or is it not? What could serve better to dispel the myth Count Hertling is at such pains to spread abroad, and according to which the annexation of Alsace and of Lorraine was carried out by its authors for the purpose of restoring to Germany German lands of which she is alleged to have been stripped by French usurpers?

What was the reason put forward by the King of Prussia to account for his determination to seize our provinces? That they were « German lands? » Not in the least, but merely that he wished by securing an outpost in French territory to shield the German territory from eventual aggression on our part.

Nor would it be difficult to find confirmation in subsequent conversations held by Bismarck with the marquis de Gabriac, the French Chargé d'affaires, of what his sovereign recorded in the autograph letter I have just quoted.

The proceeding, moreover, is thoroughly in accordance with the Prussian traditions. « I begin by taking what I want, quoth Frederick II as he entered Silesia, there will always be pedants forthcoming to prove I had a right to it ». The right of Germany to our provinces has never been proved by any pedant, for the simple reason that no such proof

was possible. As far back as the time of Louis XIV they were known to be French all the world over. And one hundred and fifty years later, general Foy declared : « Should the love of all that is great and generous ever grow weak in the hearts of the inhabitants of old France, they would have but to cross the Vosges and come to Alsace in order to revive their sense of patriotism and their energy. »

Now what was true under the Restoration is still true to-day, as they know full well who, not content with bringing about this dreadful war, attempted at the very time when they deliberately rendered it inevitable to dishonour us by the most cowardly complicity in the treacherous snare into which they were drawing Europe.

As proof whereof I will bring to light a document which the German authorities who drew it up keep carefully stowed away (you will see why presently) in the deep mystery of their most secret archives. That document became known to us but a short time ago and its authentic character cannot be disputed. It bears the signature of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg and is dated July 31st, 1914.

It is a matter of common knowledge, as officially recorded in the German White Book, that on that day the Imperial Chancellor, when instructing Herr von Schoen to notify us of the impending war between Germany and Russia, had further ordered him to ask us to remain neutral, granting us a time-limit of eighteen hours wherein to return our answer. What is not known, however, and what I now reveal is that the telegram containing these instructions ended as follows : « *If the French Government declare that they will remain neutral, Your Excellency will declare to them that we must, as a guarantee of neutra-*

lity, insist upon the handing over to us of the fortresses of Toul and Verdun, which we should occupy, and give back when the war with Russia comes to an end. The reply to this last question must reach us by four o'clock in the afternoon, on Saturday.

This shows how desirous Germany was for peace at the moment when she was declaring war, and just how sincere she is when she claims that we compelled her to stand to arms in self-defense; this is the price she intended to make us pay for our ignominy, had we been base enough to betray our ally, Russia, into her hands, to repudiate our signature as Prussia repudiated hers when she tore up the treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium. To make sure, with our consent, of being able to consummate her crime, she began by demanding of us the cession of two of our most valued and glorious fortresses — one of which has since, by the heroism of its defenders, earned a further meed of undying glory. Who can tell where she would stopped, if we had been sufficiently vile to fall in with the shameful proposal made us by such a crafty and unscrupulous foe?

Gentlemen, the case is heard. In vain do those responsible for the war seek to evade the Court of Nations and the judgment of posterity by falsifying or by suppressing documents that History will put on record.

During that fateful debate at Bordeaux, the anniversary of which we are commemorating to-day, a group of members of the National Assembly, among whom I find the names of Victor Hugo, Quinet, Louis Blanc, Schœlcher, Carnot, Henri Brisson, Lockroy, Floquet, Edmond Adam — and of whom M. Clemenceau is to-day the only survivor — declared

in an address to the chosen representatives of the annexed departments : « Whatever happens, you will remain our countrymen and our brothers. The Republic promises you eternal support in your claim for redress. »

This undertaking, moreover, has in the course of time assumed a universal character such as could not be foreseen, at the moment, by those who pledged themselves to it. No longer do the national representatives of France stand alone in saying to Alsace and Lorraine : « You shall be restored to your mother-country. » With them, it is the whole mighty coalition formed to bar the way against the disturbers of the peace and to build up on the law the international organisation of free nations; it is the voice of the Old World and of the New, of the East and of the West, the avenging and prophetic voice raised above the tumult of the battlefields, and strong in the unanimous agreement of all whose minds are swayed by justice, that intimate to the powers of destruction arrayed against the powers of life, the impossibility of achieving a victory that would spell the downfall of mankind.

ADDRESS

BY

Mr. G. Clemenceau

Prime Minister.

At the urgent request of those present, M. Clemenceau, without attempting to hide his emotion, delivered the following brief oration.

I take it as a great honour that you should desire me to speak on this memorable occasion, a privilege I had not ventured to claim myself. You have already received every satisfaction that eloquence can bestow. My part, however, is rather to act, and I fully intend to give effect to the weighty words you have been listening to. In calling upon me for a speech, I am quite aware that your main concern is to be given the assurance that the action incumbent upon me will be taken, and I am not the one to disappoint you in this respect.

My eminent colleagues, the President of the Senate, the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have spoken words of historical import that will never be forgotten.

Not for us, not for you was it needful that those words should be spoken, nor yet for the many beyond these walls who will take note of them and store them for ever in their memories. Rather were they meant to reach the ears of those nations that have delivered a wanton assault upon the civilised world and which require to be taught that they will find opposing them to the last men of unblemished conscience and with a keen sense of human dignity, men withal who are and who will remain steadfast in their resolve. For those words which you hailed with unqualified applause must now be made good in the struggle against the direst enemies of mankind.

A few days ago I was at the front, and I have brought back with me as a message from our incomparable soldiers the saying that is on every lip, that fires the hearts of them all : « They shall not break through ! »

When this has been said, what more could I add?

It is our proud claim that we are a nation possessed of lofty ideals, but the noblest sensations experienced by man, the finest sentiments that constitute his greatness are paid for dearly, at the rough contact with our enemies, in the shape of the sufferings and sacrifices whereby we are now being tried and which will earn for our sons the most precious rewards known to History.

For me the trial began at that sitting of the Assembly at Bordeaux you were told about just now, when I saw my best Alsatian friends torn from the French Parliament and when shortly after the memory of that awful tragedy that has lived in my mind ever since that grievous day was seen to be swallowed up in the cruel indifference of the nations, so quick

to become reconciled to everything, so prone to ignore the inevitable certainty of the eventual vindication of Justice and Liberty.

And lo ! that vindication is at hand in spite of ourselves. Our enemy himself has forced it upon us, the nations are up in arms for the noblest cause there can be : the establishment of a higher form of justice among men. Nor is there any one but realises that the first condition lies in the independence of the nations born to History with aspirations towards a higher standard of life for all mankind. This is the greatest duty that has been laid upon us since France earned for herself a world-wide reputation for generosity enabling her, when she fights for herself, to put forward the proud claim that she is battling for every nation enamoured of justice and to ensure a better future for all human communities.

On that good work you and I are all engaged. In my person you acclaim the hope and determination that it shall be soon accomplished. Believe me, the hour is at hand ! I am nothing but a plain soldier, here to-day and gone to-morrow. You are the representatives of France, and what is the will of France you were told just now, and will repeat to-morrow, until victory is achieved, a victory that will be your own work to a considerable extent, as it is the work of all Frenchmen !

APPENDIX

Jules Grosjean's protest was commemorated at Bordeaux in the auditorium of the Grand Théâtre where the National Assembly held its sittings in 1871.

M. Albert Lebrun, Deputy of Briey, had been chosen by the Gouvernement to preside the ceremony.

The Mayor of Bordeaux, M. Charles Gruet, who had lived through the days of mourning that followed the war in 1870, first addressed the meeting.

« The separation, he said, was a bitter one, for the two provinces wrested from us were among the fairest and most wealthy in the land. Their prosperous and hard-working populations, mindful of their past traditions and burning with a patriotism all the deeper by reason of the many trials it had undergone, were knit to France by the closest ties. We were robbed not only of a magnificent domain, but of a splendid inheritance of glory, which our forefathers had shed their blood to hand down to us intact. At times, in spite of the woeful reality, a comforting thought would alleviate our distress, the thought that the day must come when the most imprescriptible right of nations would be duly vindicated... France no longer stands alone. The conscience of mankind has awakened from its slumber ; the mighty voice of the free nations is making itself heard : their effort, spurred on by the noblest passions will bring us victory and peace. »

M. Olivier Bascou, Prefect of the Gironde, was the next speaker. Having recalled the fateful sittings of 1871, he showed how 44 years later by « stirring up the universal conscience, German aggression arrayed on our side the full might of England, the armies of our Latin sister Italy, and to crown all the innumerable hosts of free America, whose presence in the field is for us a pledge of victory.

No longer are we alone, as we were in 1870. The entire Western world has arisen against Germanism. »

M. Bouglé, Professor at the Sorbonne and Vice-President of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, in an address to a crowded meeting, demonstrated that right and justice are on our side and that her own self-interest is the only argument supporting Germany's claim to Alsace-Lorraine.

M. Charles Chaumet, late Cabinet Minister, repeated the words of President Wilson to the effect that the question of Alsace-Lorraine was not a mere question of territory, but one with which all mankind is concerned ; it is not France alone that demands the return of the two provinces, but all the civilised nations, intent upon their liberation.

Finally M. Laugel, an appointed Delegate of Alsace-Lorraine drew up the history of the protest. After paying a tribute to all who devoted their energies to the cause, and reading out the declaration of Keller, Grosjean, Teustsch and Preiss, he concluded as follows :

« The protests I have just read to you, though differing in their mode of expression were dictated by one and the same sentiment : an unswerving attachment to France. And for this reason, it is quite superfluous to ask Alsace-Lorraine once more to express her will by means of a plebiscite.

« The great voices raised so lustily in support of the sentiments of the Alsatians and Lorrainers establish the French claim to redress on an unshakable foundation, nor could I have wished for any better reward, in my declining years, than to be privileged to recall before you their manly utterance.

« Those voices are now hushed for ever, but the lesson they teach us is an undying one ; they tell us, in the first place — a point I wish to emphasise to day — that the soul of Alsace is lacking neither in energy nor in generosity ; they remind us moreover that a people, whether great or small, derives its real worth from its loyalty to its national traditions, that it can earn the respect of History only by showing itself stout-hearted in the hour of conflict, faithful to its pledged word, and the upholder of Justice. And it is because Alsace-Lorraine has ever shown herself possessed of these virtues that she is worthy of being restored to France. »

ADDRESS BY Mr. ALBERT LEBRUN

Minister of the Blocade and of the Liberated Districts.

The whole of France to-day is living over again one of the most painful hours of her history.

In her schools, her places of public meeting, her churches, her camps, and her ships of war, she suspends her activities for a few moments to read once more the Declaration made on March 1st, 1871, before the National Assembly, by the Deputies of the Bas-Rhin, the Haut-Rhin, the Meurthe and the Moselle, to protest against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. Every where she stands in deep and subdued thought, from the great city of Paris, where at this very time an imposing ceremony is taking place in presence of the highest authorities in the land, to the most distant and lonely villages.

Now of all these demonstrations, fraught with the selfsame spirit of burning patriotism, none can be more heart-stirring than this meeting of ours in Bordeaux, the noble city wherein was enacted, forty-seven years ago, the pitiful drama we are now commemorating.

As you listened, a few minutes ago, to M. Laugel, reading out in sober and impressive tones the sentences of that immortal protest, and recalling the most poignant incidents of that tragic afternoon, when the sacrifice of Alsace-Lorraine was consummated, did you not seem to hear the despairing appeal of Jules Grosjean, faithfully preserved as it were by the very walls of this building for close upon half a century, and now repeated by them as a distant and extraordinarily moving echo !

A Government privileged by a fortunate coincidence to have for its leader one of the Republican members who in the National Assembly promised Alsace-Lorraine to uphold for evermore its claim to redress, could but make a point of taking part in such a demonstration. They sent to it as their representative a member of the Cabinet, who

is at the same time a Deputy of Lorraine and who for almost twenty years has been returned at every election by the only portion of the former Moselle department that has remained French. More than all others, the inhabitants of this district suffered the woes of separation, for in that evil hour they witnessed the severance of most of the ties of family, friendship or business that had hitherto made life worth living. And as though they had not yet enough to bear, they are now subjected in their turn to the German yoke. For the past forty-three months they have endured physical and moral sufferings, the full extent of which the future alone will reveal.

And as it is by virtue of their unwavering confidence that I find myself in the position I occupy to-day, what more natural than that my first thoughts should turn to them, that in your name, in the name of every part of France that has not been deprived of its liberty, I should send them a message of hope and encouragement such as may be of some comfort to them at the present juncture.

Gentlemen, one who was present at the fateful sitting of March 1st, 1871, was telling me yesterday that on the evening of that day Bordeaux was wrapped in a deep and mournful silence that bore witness to the general feeling of sadness and oppression.

Not Bordeaux, not France alone, should have grieved on that occasion, but the whole world as well.

The deed then consummated was not merely the mutilation of our country, the loss of two fair provinces, the yielding up of a population of more than a million and a half of Frenchmen, more French than the best of us, but it was also the consecration of the victory of violence over justice, of might over right.

« If this instrument misnamed a treaty be carried out, Victor Hugo had exclaimed with prophetic insight at the sitting of March 1st, if these ruthless terms be accepted, the peace of Europe is at an end. »

Europe then turned a deaf ear to the agonised appeal made to it by France, and to-day the whole world has to bear the tragic consequences of that indifference.

For forty-three years, in studied silence, France fought down her sorrow and let events take their course, but without becoming resigned to the great wrong inflicted upon her.

For forty-three years, beyond the Vosges, our countrymen adhered faithfully to the oath taken on March 1st. « Our best wishes will attend you, and we will wait, with

full trust in the future, for the time when a regenerate France shall take up once more the threads of her mighty destiny ».

Our brothers of Alsace and Lorraine have kept their word to the full, in the most loyal, the most unflinching manner.

Nothing has been able to overcome their steadfast attachment to France. No vexation, no persecution has impaired their faith in the justice of their cause.

Cut off from every French association, forbidden to use the French language in the schools, closely watched at every turn by a police quick to take offence, arrested and sentenced on the most flimsy pretexts, they never yielded to oppression. Neither did they prove more amenable to flattery, to the promises and benefits of every description held out to tempt them into compliance, to the incessant encomiums lavished upon all that is German by the public Press, at the Universities and in the schools. To quote one of the most zealous propagandists of the Alsatian cause, they countered the tall words of erudition, organisation, discipline, collective thought, and the almighty power of the State, by asserting the dignity of the human person, the right of peoples to shape their own destinies, their loyalty to a past wherein they enjoyed the most pleasant years of their history, their love for a civilisation from which nothing could ever cut them off.

Possessing their souls in sublime patience, unmoved by the slow flight of time and the never-ending assaults upon their irreducible determination to remain French, our brothers of Alsace and Lorraine silently awaited the hour of deliverance.

Just causes, Gentlemen, are ever seen to prevail sooner or later. And when on August 2nd 1914, Germany considered the time propitious for a war of conquest, the injustice suffered by France and by our two unfortunate provinces ever since 1871 stood revealed in its full significance; it was seen to be, indeed, as has been so aptly observed, an injustice of world-wide import.

Already we have our truest revenge in noting that our cause is one with that of all the nations of the Entente, that it has been adopted by them unanimously, and that it is bound up indissolubly with the very cause of threatened humanity.

Let us listen to the voices that reach us from beyond the seas, speaking on behalf of the great democracies by which the right of justice was ever held in honour.

First we have M. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, addressing the delegates of the Trades Unions, to whom he says :

« We are determined to uphold to the end the claim of the French democracy to the redress of the great wrong committed in 1871, when regardless of the wishes of their populations two French provinces were violently wrested from France and incorporated with the German Empire. This ulcer has poisoned the peace of Europe for half a century, nor can normal conditions be restored until it is cut out. There can be no more striking illustration than this of the folly and wickedness of violating national right by favour of a short-lived military success. »

With him President Wilson, the watchful custodian of right in the troubled period we are traversing declares in his speech to Congress dealing with the conditions of the world peace :

« All French territories must be liberated and every other invaded region must be restored. The wrong done to France by Prussia in 1870 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine — a wrong that has jeopardised the peace of the world for close upon fifty years — must be redressed in such a manner as to make peace secure in the common interest. »

And when France makes her voice heard on the same subject through the mouthpiece of her Government, she holds the selfsame language, so true is it that her own cause has become the cause of the world. M. Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, set forth the French point of view a few weeks ago, to the applause of the whole Chamber :

« The question of Alsace-Lorraine, he declared, is not a French question, but one of world-wide import. It is the very symbol of right and justice. Ever since our unfortunate provinces were wrested from us, there has been no rest, no stability in the world. In claiming as an imprescriptible right the return of our fellow-countrymen to their native land, it is not for France alone that we fight, but for all our Allies and for the cause of civilisation. As a matter of fact, the question of Alsace-Lorraine is not, as superficial observers are too apt to think, a French territorial problem, it is a world problem.

« According as it is solved in the French or in the German sense, there will or there will not come into existence a new Europe, constituted in conformity with the principles and forces that create and determine contemporary nations.

According as Alsace-Lorraine ceases or does not cease to be a prey to violence, becomes again what she has constantly wished to be or continues to be the victim of those who have destroyed right in her person, there will or there will not be lasting peace among the nations. »

Nor can such solemn and reiterated assertions of the peoples participating in the war for the vindication of right fail to find an echo eventually in the German conscience, deaf as it may be for the present to the appeals of justice. It is doubtless for the purpose of preventing that conscience from yielding to such appeals that the German authorities are so loud in asserting that there is no question of Alsace-Lorraine. But all their assertions cannot prevail against the hard facts.

No question of Alsace-Lorraine, indeed ! What then is the meaning of all those demonstrations by which our annexed brothers, while remaining *de facto* bound by the treaty that made them over to Germany, never cease to give expression to their real sentiments?

True, indeed, Alsace does not wear her heart on her sleeve.

The misfortunes she has suffered and which still weigh upon her mind have made her cautious. She is not given to displaying her feelings publicly and it is quite possible to travel through the length and breadth of the land without perceiving the least sign revealing her secret thoughts.

But let some fortuitous circumstance arise, that suddenly called up memories of the past, let some martial strain be heard in the neighbourhood resembling those she knew so well of old, then indeed she was moved to the wildest excitement.

You should have seen the numbers of Alsatians that trooped to our reviews of the Fourteenth of July at Nancy, at Lunéville, in the garrison towns of the Vosges, at Belfort, or to our patriotic celebrations at Mars-la-Tours and elsewhere. How joyfully they unbent in those all too rare hours of freedom !

And all those sons of hers who have served in the ranks of our army, both before and since the war, worthy descendants, one and all, of Fabert, Ney, Kléber, Rapp, Lefebvre, do they not testify in the most solemn, the most convincing manner to her love for her mother-country !

Gentlemen the old law of might has frequently prevailed in the course of the ages ; time and again man has been powerless to prevent the triumph of injustice. Yet the right has never been entirely overwhelmed, for it is eternal.

Though temporarily obscured, it subsists and the day is bound to come when it shines forth more full of life and strength and splendour than ever.

For nearly half a century right may have seemed to be banished from Europe, but on August 2nd, 1914, it suddenly was seen to take up the gauntlet thrown down by Germany before the face of the world and bar the way to her overweening designs.

At that very moment, by the coming into play of the undying principles that guide the nations, the question of Alsace-Lorraine loomed up before the universal conscience more clearly defined and more insistent than before.

In our modern world two conflicting principles were suddenly brought face to face; the right of nations to shape their own destinies and the claim of brute force to enslave them.

In presence of the gravity of the situation, the nations realised that if they were not to perish they must make their choice and say whether they meant to allow German imperialism to become the supreme law of national evolution.

That is why the conflict at once assumed such vast proportions. All that was not German in the Old World and in the New took up the cause of right as against might, and one after the other every State enamoured of liberty and justice sided with France to ensure their triumph.

No doubt the fight has been a severe one for nearly four years, and before the goal is reached after which they are striving with magnificent ardour and the full might of their resources, thrown unstintingly into the struggle, the Allies will find their path beset with many another fierce ordeal. But what are these as compared with the glorious days that will surely be our reward if we do but display the requisite valour and endurance. Nor will the finest pages in our past history then compare with those about to be written.

After a long and painful martyrdom, our Alsace and our Lorraine will revert to us because right demands it, because the hateful wrong committed in 1871 must be redressed. And Republican France, faithful as ever to her noble traditions, in spite of sufferings and ruins, will at least be able to take pride in the fact that she has once more saved the world and the cause of civilisation.

On that blessed day, we will come again to Bordeaux and assemble in this building. Our songs of joy will

hush for evermore the tragic echoes of the appeal once made by our fathers within these walls. And keeping the tryst assigned to us by them, we will say to them : « Now may ye rest in peace, for the destinies are accomplished. »